



NEWS RELEASE

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ■ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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BLM Lands Surrounding Fort Stanton Under Stage III Closure

Due to the extreme fire danger in the Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), the area has been closed to the public. The closure, effective May 2, 2006, occurred at the same time the Lincoln National Forest was placed under Stage III closure.

Only the Fort Stanton Cave Road will remain open for the following uses:

- Persons with valid Fort Stanton Cave Permits, only for the specific dates of the permit.
- The Fort Stanton Cave Campground will be only open for day use only during the valid dates of the cave permit (No overnight camping will be allowed).
- The Fort Stanton Cave Road and Road leading to the Merchant Marine Cemetery will be open to the Lincoln County Overland Stage.
- The parking area adjacent to U.S. Highway 380 on the Fort Stanton Cave Road will be open only to visitors who are awaiting a ride with the Lincoln County Overland Stage. The Horse Trails parking area adjacent to NM Highway 220 will also remain open to the public.

All other lands within the Fort Stanton ACEC will remain closed.

The Villages of Cloudcroft, Ruidoso, Mayhill, Sacramento, Weed, Timberon, Capitan and Queen are still open for business and the BLM joins the Forest Service in encouraging visitors to come and enjoy what the area has to offer.

"Public safety is our top concern right now. We believe that closing Fort Stanton ACEC will reduce the risk of a human caused fire from starting." said Chuck Schmidt, Fire Management Officer for the BLM Roswell Field Office.

The area closures do not affect Federal and State Highways that lead into the mountain communities.

As a reminder, all persons allowed within the restricted area are required to follow the Stage III order, which prohibits the following:



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- Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, charcoal, broiler, coal, or wood stove fire
- Smoking
- Using an explosive (including fireworks)
- Operating a chainsaw, or other equipment powered by an internal combustion engine, is prohibited from 10:00 am to 1:00 am
- Operating or using any internal or external combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly installed, maintained, and in effective working order.
- Welding or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame
- Possessing or using a motor vehicle off National Forest System roads, except when parking in an area devoid of vegetation within 10 feet of the roadway; and except for parking overnight in developed campgrounds.

For more information on current fire restrictions on public lands in the Southwest, call **1-877-864-6985**. This is a toll-free hotline sponsored by natural resource agencies in the Southwest. You may also call the Southeast New Mexico Fire Prevention Team at (505) 434-7332 or visit the Southwest Area Wildland Fire Operations website at <http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/>.

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